REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Applicants hereby confirm their election of Group II claims 8-13 for further prosecution in this application. Group I claims 1-7 and 14-19 are being canceled without prejudice to the Applicants right to pursue those claims in continuing applications. Claims 11 and 13 are being amended to more particularly point out the invention, and claim 10 is being amended to correct claim dependency. Basis for the amendment of claim 11 is found in paragraph [0023] of the application as filed. Reconsideration of this application in view of these amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim 13 of the application was rejected as indefinite under 35 U.S.C. §112 on the ground that it failed to further differentiate from the subject matter of claim 8. In response to that rejection claim 13 is being amended to add reference to a transfer from an extrudate support (25) to a separate dryer tray (134), as illustrated in Fig. 6 of the drawing and described in paragraph [0028] of the specification. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 13 in light of this amendment are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claims 8, 12 and 13 of the application under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over Avery, U.S. Patent No. 5,205,991 (Avery) in view of DeMasters, U.S. Patent No. 5,432,866 (DeMasters). That rejection is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

Avery discloses the extrusion of plasticized ceramic extrudate onto a carrier, the cutting of pieces from the extrudate, and the moving of the cut pieces along the carrier and onto a ceramic dryer tray. Avery fails to teach or suggest applying a reference mark to the extrudate as it is extruded, correcting the orientation of the cut sections of the extrudate in response to a reference mark misalignment while the extrudate is supported on the carrier, transferring the cut section of extrudate along the length of the carrier while preventing any orientation change of the cut section; and visually inspecting the orientation of the cut section of the extrudate. These omissions are not surprising since Avery fails to recognize the problem addressed by the invention, which is the cell deformation that can occur in rotationally misaligned extrudate pieces during drying (paragraph [0029] of the specification).

The Examiner has suggested that that preventing cut section orientation changes is inherent in the air bearings of Avery, Fig. 2. That suggestion is incorrect. In fact it is the ease with which objectionable rotational re-orientation can occur in cut sections supported on air bearings that has necessitated the use of the steps of piece re-orientation after cutting (Fig. 5 of the drawings) and visual re-checking of piece orientation on dryer trays (Fig. 7 of the drawings) in accordance with the claimed invention. The air cushion support generated by the gas ports in air bearings ((23) in Fig. 2 of Avery; (60) and (135) in Applicants' Fig. 2) provide no inhibitions whatever against cut piece rotation during transport.

The Examiner relies on DeMasters to suggest the limitations of Applicants' claims not suggested by Avery. However, DeMasters clearly fails to disclose correcting the orientation of cut sections of extrudate while on a carrier, or transferring cut extrudate sections along a carrier while preventing orientation changes.

DeMaster's only teaching is to correct corkscrew exhibited by extruding striped plastic pipe, and that correction is done at the extruder by gripping roller means unsuitable for use with soft plasticized ceramic extrudate. More importantly, no means downstream from the corkscrew correction and printing systems are provided (or needed or suggested) for controlling the movement of, or for correcting the orientation of, cut sections of the extruded pipe. Clearly, therefore, there can be no suggestion in DeMasters to modify Avery in a manner which would provide such cut piece stabilization and/or reorientation; yet such stabilization and/or reorientation are critical aspects of the present invention as claimed.

For the above reasons it is respectfully submitted that claim 8, and therefore claims 12 and 13 depending therefrom, are neither taught nor suggested by the combination of Avery and DeMasters, and therefore that those claims should be allowed.

The Examiner has further rejected claims 9-11 of the application as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103 over Avery in view of DeMasters, taken further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,906,170 to Nelson. That rejection is respectfully traversed on the following grounds.

First, all of the reasons set forth above in support of the patentability of claim 8 over Avery and DeMasters are equally applicable to the rejection of claims 9-11, since

those claims directly or indirectly depend from claim 8, and since Nelson provides no teachings that would suggest the features of that claim not supplied by the combination of Avery and DeMasters. Further, as to the particular rejection of claim 9, Nelson does not apply an inkjet reference mark to extruded plastic tubing, but rather an inkjet message. Moreover, the printing location for that message is controlled only to effect the centering of the message lengthwise on the projected cut length of the tubing. Nelson is entirely absent any suggestion to use the message printing location to detect or effect any rotational realignment of the cut tube sections.

As to claim 10, DeMasters clearly fails to suggest inspection of the cut ends of the extruding tubing, since the only inspection method and apparatus disclosed involve the inspection of the sides of the extruding pipe. Thus the only method disclosed is to photodetect the presence of striping on those tube side surfaces; there is no suggestion, or any perceived need, to inspect the ends of the extruded pipe.

Finally, as to claim 11, an amendment to more particularly define a corkscrew correction step having utility for the handling of easily deformed soft plasticized extrudate is proposed. That method does not encompass frictionally gripping rollers having pivot axes non-perpendicular to the extrusion direction as in DeMasters, which gripping would clearly cause unacceptable surface damage to soft plasticized extrudate. Instead, it is directed to the use of soft deformable rollers that can urge the extrudate in a rotation direction counter to the direction of corkscrew rotation without damage to the extrudate and while it is supported on an air bearing.

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that Nelson fails to supplement the teachings of Avery and DeMasters in a manner that would suggest the subject matter of claims 9-11 of this application as amended. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 9-11 are respectfully requested.

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Applicants respectfully submit that the remaining claims of this application are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly favorable reconsideration of this application and the issuance of a Notice of Allowance herein are courteously solicited.

Applicants believe that no extension of time is necessary to make this Reply timely, but contingently request that the Office grant such time extension pursuant to 37

C.F.R. § 1.136(a) as is necessary to make this Reply timely, if in fact such an extension is required. In that contingency the Office is hereby authorized to charge any necessary extension fee or surcharge to the deposit account of Corning Incorporated, Deposit Account 03-3325.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kees van der Sterre
Attorney for Assignee
Reg. No. 25,938
Corning Incorporated
SP-TI-03-1
Corning, NY 14831
Phone: (607) 974-3294